



Principals' Organizational Justice as Correlate of Teachers' Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

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Abstract

This study determined the relationship between principals' organizational justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra state. The study adopted a correlational research design. Three research question guided the study and three null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The population for the study was 7027 teachers in the 266 public secondary schools in the State. The sample was 1405 teachers drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure which included proportionate stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Two structured questionnaires developed by the researchers titled: "Organizational Justice Questionnaire" (OJQ) and Teachers' Commitment Scale (TCS) were used for data collection. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts. Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items in the instruments and this yielded co-efficient values of 0.75 and 0.72 for OJQ and TCS respectively. The researchers with the aid of 12 research assistants administered a total of 1405 copies of the questionnaires on the respondents. At the end of the exercise, 1324 copies representing 94% were successfully completed, retrieved and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The result of the finding indicated that there is a very high positive relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. There is a medium positive relationship between principals' procedural justice, interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that principals should always imbibe the behaviour of being fair in the procedures or processes used in arriving at and administering decisions. This will help in motivating teachers' performance and commitment in achieving the goals of the school.

Key words: Organizational justice, teachers' commitment, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice.

Introduction

Teachers at all levels of education are the foundation and bedrock of quality education in the society. Teachers are very important in any education system as no proper education can ever be achieved without adequately trained and motivated teachers. Teachers, as stated by Panda and

Mchanty (2013), and Mwangi, (2013) are the pillars of the society who help students to grow and shoulder the responsibility of nation building. Teachers are indeed the nation's human capital, and every effort needs to be made to ensure improvement in their job commitment.

Commitment can be seen as the process through which people become willing to give their loyalty and energy to a particular social system (Mart, 2013). Teachers' commitment, according to Mart is the emotional bond between the teacher and the school. Teacher's commitment can be defined using what Douglas (2010) described as a teacher's identification with and involvement in a particular school. This commitment can be characterized by a strong personal belief in and acceptance of the school goals and values, a desire to exert oneself for the betterment of the school, and a strong will to remain with the school. Ezeugbor cited in Obiekwe (2019), defined teacher's organizational commitment as the psychological identification of the individual teacher with the school and the intention of that teacher to maintain his membership of the school, and show all personal interest.

High level of teachers' commitment is essential for school success. Teachers with high level of commitment view themselves as integral part of the school, what threatens the school endangers them as well, they do their best to perform their duties better, and work for the school as if it belong to them (Oberholster and Taylor, 2009). In contrast, teachers with low level of commitment are less faithful to the school, view themselves as outsiders and are more concerned with personal success than with the success of the school as a whole.

For optimal teachers' commitment in the school, their perception of fairness concerning school's decisions and actions is crucial. Organizational fairness or justice depicts employees' perceptions towards justice in organizations' treatment of them, and their reaction as a result of this perception (Elamin, 2012). According to Armstrong (2009), justice referred to actions that are judged as ethical or unethical based on the fairness shown to those affected, while Dundar and Tabancali (2012) mentioned that organizational justice means how rewards and punishments, rules, process, communication and interaction was applied equally or not. Organizational justice can also be perceived as individual's or group's perception of the fairness of treatment (including, but not limited to, allocations) received from an organization and their behavior reaction to such perceptions.

Organizational justice indicates the extent to which teachers in a school consider their principal's decisions and actions to be objective and whether the processes and results obtained at the school are fair or not. It also has to do with how the teachers' perceive decisions in the school, whether the principal is fair in making decisions and how these decisions affect them. Researchers such as Cohen-Charash and Spector, (2001), Elamin (2012) and Emenike (2021) in their studies identified three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

Distributive Justice according to Ajala (2015) refers to outcomes being distributed proportional to inputs based on equity principle. It is the subjective evaluation of teachers to the extent to which outcomes such as wages, promotions, work roles and workloads are distributed fairly

(Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson and Porter 2011, McShane and Von Glinow 2018). To achieve distributive justice if they are applied appropriately, three allocation rules are to be applied, they are equality (to each the same), equity (to each in accordance with contributions) and need (to each in accordance with the most urgency). Therefore, distributive justice focuses on the degree of perceived fairness in the distribution and allocation of outcomes within the school based upon the inputs.

Procedural Justice which is the second dimension is concerned with the perceived fairness of the procedures or processes used in arriving at and administering decisions (McShane and Von Glinow 2018). It is the procedures by which outcomes are allocated within the school. Procedural justice is relevant to how employees feel justice towards decision making procedures, and to what extent these decisions were related to teachers' needs and viewpoints. The emphasis here is on the importance of fairness of the methods or procedure used (decision criteria, control of the process) at the school. These are consistency, lack of bias, accuracy, correlation, representation of all concerned and consistency with ethical norms. According to Emenike, (2021), when teachers feel that there has been an unfair distribution of work benefits in the school, this feeling of unfair judgment may result to negative emotions and may alter the teacher's psychological wellbeing as well as performance and commitment to the job. For example, when a teacher who has put the same number of years in service with his colleagues is not promoted along with others, the teacher may feel cheated and may begin to put up some unsocial behaviour in the school to show displeasure.

The third dimension which is interactional justice exists when school principal treat teachers with respect and sensitivity and explains the rationale for decisions thoroughly. Interactional justice can also be seen as the treatment that a teacher receives as decisions are made in the school. Interactional justice can also plays out in the school organization when teachers treat one another with dignity and courtesy in the discharge of their duties. Bies and Moag cited in Ajala (2015) identified some key aspects of interactional justice which can enhance teachers' perception of fair treatments. They are truthfulness (information given must be realistic and accurate, presented in an open and forth right manner), respect (teachers treated with dignity), propriety (statements and questions should never be improper or involve prejudicial elements such as racism or sexism) and justification (when a perceived injustice has occurred, giving explanation or apology can reduce or eliminate the sense of anger generated).

Teachers who are justly treated by their employer are more likely to follow workplace rules and regulations and show extra performance and commitment towards their job and the school. In other words, teachers will repay procedural, distributive and interactional justice with hard work and commitment. Odunayo, Ayodeji, Omotolani and Oyebanji (2015) observed that when teachers experience fair treatment from the school they are more likely to show a positive attitude, good behaviour and increased performance to the school.

The situation in secondary schools in Nigeria and indeed Anambra state shows that most principals appear to be characterised by various forms of unjust practices. There are claims by some teachers in secondary schools in Anambra state that their principals do not allow them

participate nor voice their preferences when decisions are made in the school (Onyeidu, 2015). The researcher as a secondary school teacher has also observed first hand some unjust behaviours of principals towards their teachers. Some principals have been observed to not carry their teachers along in school decision making, sometimes they fail to appreciate and respect the personal worth of teachers. Allocation of tasks and positions in the school are sometimes not based on merit but based on loyalty to the Principal. These unjust practices from principals appears to be the reason most teachers display poor performance and commitment to the school, as could be observed in their poor attitude to work, absenteeism, lack of dedication to teaching and carrying out assignments, and unauthorized movement from their duty posts (Ezeugbor, 2015).

Fair processes and behaviour arising from school principals can lead to a feeling of intellectual and emotional recognition by teachers which in turn will create trust and commitment that enhances teachers' attitude and display of performance to duties. Workers with high perceptions of organizational justice appear to be motivated to higher levels of job performance while those whose organizational justice is low may respond passively and negatively by resorting to withdrawal behaviours, by being absent from work, putting in low quality output, or even leave the organization entirely. According to Zainhpour, Fini and Minkamili in Emenike (2021) perception of injustice among teachers in school can lead them to mistrust their management, low productivity, ineffectiveness and dissatisfaction. These situations therefore made it imperative to determine the relationship between principals' organizational justice and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Principals have the responsibility of creating effective learning environment, one that is built and sustained by fairness and justice. However, in Anambra state, principals seem to be highly characterized by various forms of unjust practices. Observations by the researchers in some secondary schools in the state appear to give the impression that teachers are not treated fairly by principals. There seem to be elements of mistrust, favouritism, unexcused stay away from work, suspicion of management and low performance. Most principals also appear to disrespect teachers and do not uphold their rights and privileges.

There are also concerns by some teachers that their principals do not seek for their opinions when important decisions concerning the school are being made. Often time, delegation of tasks and allocation of positions in the school are not based on teacher's ability or specialization but on loyalty to the principal. Recruitment, selection and promotion exercises are not without unfair practices as it appears that it is done on the basis of "man-know-man" and this arouses the feeling of mistrust amongst teachers. Perhaps, these series of unfair practices may be the reason most teachers are not committed to the school, as could be observed in their poor attitude to work, absenteeism, lack of dedication to teaching and carrying out assigned tasks. It is as a result of the foregoing that the researcher sought answers to the question, what is the relationship between principals' organizational justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra state?

Research Question

1. What is the nature of relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the nature of relationship between principals' procedural justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
3. What is the nature of relationship between principals' interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant relationship between principals' procedural justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
3. There is no significant relationship between principals' interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Methods

A Correlation survey research design was employed for the study. This study was carried out in the 266 public secondary schools in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 7,027 teachers. The sample for the study is 1405 teachers drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure involving proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. Two researchers' developed questionnaires titled: "Organizational Justice Questionnaire" (OJQ) and Teachers' Commitment Scale (TCS) were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validity using three experts. A pilot test using 20 teachers from two government owned public secondary schools in Enugu State was used to ascertain the reliability of the instruments. The scores obtained from the 20 respondents were collated to determine the internal consistency of the items in each of the instruments. This was done using Cronbach's Alpha method. The reliability coefficient for the three dimensions of OJQ was 0.75, 0.77 and 0.71 while TCS was 0.84. These scores were deemed high enough for the instrument to be taken as reliable and adequate for the study. The direct method of administration of the questionnaire was employed by the researchers. Out of the 1405 copies of the questionnaire that were distributed a total of 1324 copies were retrieved back and used for data analysis. The return rate was approximately 94% of the sample which the researcher considered satisfactory for the study. Data analysis was done using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Results

Table 1: Pearson r on the Nature of Relationship between Principals' Distributive Justice and Teachers' Commitment

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Distributive Justice Teachers' Commitment	1324	0.83	Very High Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows that there is a very high positive relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is indicated by the size of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient r , which is 0.83.

Table 2: Pearson r on the Nature of Relationship between Principals' Procedural Justice and Teachers' Commitment

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Procedural Justice Teachers' Commitment	1324	0.59	Medium Positive Relationship

In the above table, the analysis shows that there is a medium positive relationship between principals' procedural justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is shown by the size of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient r , which is 0.59.

Table 3: Pearson r on the Nature of Relationship between Principals' Interactional Justice and Teachers' Commitment

Source of Variation	N	r	Remark
Interactional Justice Teachers' Commitment	1324	0.56	Medium Positive Relationship

The above analysis shows that there is a medium positive relationship between principals' interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is shown by the size of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient r , which is 0.56.

Discussion

The finding of this study showed that a very high positive relationship exist between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Distributive justice can be explained as the fairness associated with the distribution of resources among individuals and groups which considered based on three principles including fairness, equality, needs and its subsidiary rules. An increase in principals' distributive justice behaviour will result to an increase in teachers' job performance and vice versa.

The finding of this study conforms to that of Van den Akker, Heres, Lasthuizen, and Six, (2009) that employees' perception of their leader's ethical values such as justice and fairness had a potential impact on the level of employees' commitment. This is supported by Agha, Nwekpa and Eze (2017), Becerra (2010), Cemaloğlu and Kılınç (2012), Handford and Leithwood (2013), Ismail (2014) and Sofia, Ahmad, and Djumilah, (2017). These researchers found in their studies that equal and fair treatment of staff and their commitment have a significant positive relationship.

The finding of the hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding is consistent with that of Yauvz (2011) and Nojani (2012) that organizational justice perceptions of teachers' had significant impact on their performance and commitment. These findings are corroborated by Agha, Nwekpa and Eze (2017) and Thompson, (2022) that equal and fair treatment of staff and their commitment are found to have a significant positive relationship.

Another finding of this study indicates that there is a medium positive relationship between principals' procedural justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding is consistent with Bağrıyanık and Can (2017). According to the result of their study, when school leaders are fair and just in the allocation of work benefits and privileges in the organization in a higher level, teachers feel less anger, complaint and anxiety, thereby leading to higher commitment to duty. This finding supports Zhu, Norman, Peng, Riggio, and Sosik, (2012) who found that school leadership justice behaviour has a positive effect on increasing the teachers' commitment to a higher level.

Similarly, Mohamed (2014) is of the view that when employees perceive that their organization is just in terms of fulfilling its side of the contract, they are most likely to be committed while Fatt, Khin and Heng (2010) reported that employees were more committed when they felt they were rewarded fairly for the work they have done.

The finding of the corresponding hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between principals' procedural justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding supports Thompson, (2022) that there is a significant correlation between teachers' perceived procedural justice and their job engagement. This finding supports that of Malik and Naeem (2011), Becerra (2010); Ghamrawi, (2011); Cemaloğlu and Kılınç (2012); Handford and Leithwood (2013), and Ismail (2014). The results of these studies showed that the relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment is significant.

This study also found that there is a medium positive relationship between principals' interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding agrees with Nojani (2012), who reported that organizational justice perception of teachers had a significant positive relationship on teachers' job commitment. The above finding supports Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog, and Folger (2010) that leaders who display high regard for teachers have impact on their willingness to put extra effort for the organization. When followers perceive top manager's good moral image, enthusiasm about the organization and the willingness to treat them with dignity and courtesy, this perception may be translated into a strong appreciation of top management by employees within an organization and will inspire them to improved performance.

In contrast Emenike and Nwogbo (2021) found a low positive correlation between teachers' perception of organizational justice and their job commitment. This disparity may be attributed to the difference in time of carrying out both studies. Between 2021 and 2023 principals may have attended various improvement trainings and as a result have improved in their interactional justice behaviour.

The finding of the hypothesis showed that there is a significant relationship between principals' interactional justice and teachers' commitment in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding agrees with Nojani (2012) and Eranil and Ozblen (2017). These studies found a high level of significant positive relationship between organizational justice of the principals and teachers commitment to the school.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that there is a very high positive and significant relationship between principals' distributive justice and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Anambra State. There is a medium positive and significant relationship between principals' procedural justice, interactional justice and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Recommendations

The study also recommends that principals should always imbibe the behaviour of being fair in the procedures or processes used in arriving at and administering decisions. This will help in motivating teachers' performance and commitment in achieving the goals of the school.

Principals should unfailingly discharge their duties with dignity. They should be open for discussions with teachers and inspire them at all times. This will increase teachers' sense of obligation to the school and will make them to continue to put in their best towards achieving the goals of the school.

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